

Disability Awareness Month 2005

ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS FOR ADULT ADVOCATES

The theme of Disability Awareness Month 2005 is “Mix it up.” The poster, which features four children selling lemonade at a neighborhood lemonade stand, illustrates the theme, as the children not only “mix up” their lemonade but also include children both with and without disabilities in their activity. The text of the poster reads, “Friends make everything sweeter. Working together and having fun is a winning recipe for friendship – and success.” The goal of this year’s campaign is to encourage children to have positive attitudes about disability and to be inclusive in their everyday activities.

Adult disability advocates have always played a critical role in spreading the message of Disability Awareness Month and changing Hoosiers’ attitudes about disability. This year, we are asking that adult advocates focus their awareness efforts on children, who are still forming their opinions about such issues as disability. Following are activities you can use to explain the message of Disability Awareness Month 2005 to children. If you need additional resources, please visit www.in.gov/gpcpd or contact the Council at (317) 232-7770 (voice) or gpcpd@gpcpd.org (e-mail).

Activities

1. Arrange with a local school or the children's section of the public library to offer a speaker to address disability issues. The speaker could be a person with a disability, particularly someone who acquired a disability; a person who works with people with disabilities, such as a sign language interpreter; the parent of a child with a disability; or even you. Allow time for questions at the end. You might also ask the speaker to demonstrate any assistive technology he or she uses, if applicable.
2. Suggest to a local school that its students complete an accessibility survey of the school building as a Disability Awareness Month project. Provide the students with the necessary resources/checklists. Afterward, meet with them to go over the results. Discuss how the barriers the students identified can affect people with disabilities and prevent them from participating fully in school activities. Help the students draft a letter to the school principal asking that accessibility problems be addressed, then contact the principal to offer the necessary resources and contacts.
3. Partner with local schools, places of worship, or Boys and Girls Clubs to arrange an inclusive sporting event. Children with disabilities can participate, with few or no adaptations, in almost any sport. For example, you might choose to organize a basketball tournament or track and field events. Make sure each team is inclusive; do not create segregated teams that compete against one another. The event will encourage children with and without disabilities to work together and will show the children that everyone can contribute to the team.
4. Work with your local schools and public libraries to prepare a Disability Awareness Month reading list. Ask the librarian to display the books in a prominent location; also arrange disability-focused story hours. You might also consider offering a prize to the child who reads the highest number of disability-related books during March.
5. Ask your mayor to declare March as Disability Awareness Month in your community. Encourage him or her to make the announcement at a local school so children can be involved in the process. You might also consider having the mayor introduce a disability-related speaker or other program at a school-wide convocation or to make a speech about the progress the community has made in meeting the needs of people with disabilities.

6. Arrange a disability awareness fair at a school or other central location that offers activities for both children and adults. Prepare activity stations that help people without disabilities to understand what it is like to have a particular disability. (For more information, request a copy of the Council's *Awareness Activities Booklet*.) You might also demonstrate assistive technology, teach attendees how to write their names in Braille and offer quick sign language tutorials.
7. Organize a Disability Awareness Month open house, if you work with a company that offers services to people with disabilities. Invite classes to visit on a field trip, then show the children the ways in which people with disabilities are becoming more active members of the community. Ask clients with disabilities to interact with the students during their visit.
8. Post the Disability Awareness Month 2005 artwork in your place of business and seek inclusion of the theme and message in your company newsletter and on the Web site, billing statements, paycheck envelopes and bulletin boards during March. You can even have the message placed on your postage machine for outgoing mail. Also work with local schools, places of worship, the Boys and Girls Club, and other places where children gather, asking them to post and distribute Disability Awareness Month materials.